VOA NEWS

February 7, 2019

VOA news. I'm Christopher Cruise reporting.

President Trump had harsh words for a top Democrat Wednesday over plans for a broad new investigation into Russian election interference and the president's own foreign financial interests.

Associated Press correspondent Sagar Meghani reports.

House Intelligence Committee Chair Adam Schiff says it'll look at "the scope and scale" of Russia's efforts during the presidential race and whether foreign actors had leverage over the president, his family or associates.

The president says Schiff "has no basis" for that.

"He's just a political hack who's trying to build a name for himself."

The president suggested last night lawmakers abandon what he called their "ridiculous partisan investigations."

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi says that's a threat and Congressman Hakeem Jeffries the new Democratic House majority will push ahead.

"We will not be bullied by the president of the United States."

Foreign ministers and senior officials from the U.S.-led anti-Islamic State coalition have been meeting in Washington to try to develop plans in response to President Trump's decision to withdraw American forces from Syria.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said this is no time to let up on ISIS.

"The fight is one that we will continue to wage alongside of you. The drawdown in troops is essentially a tactical change, it is not a change in the mission."

Pompeo [discu...] addressing the 79-member global coalition on Wednesday. He said while "the nature of the fight is changing," U.S. goals remained the same.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan is accusing the United States of "imperialism" in its efforts to oust the Venezuelan President Nicholás Maduro.

Erdoğan's latest verbal salvo in support of his ally Maduro comes amid growing American pressure on Turkey to end its support for the beleaguered Venezuelan leader.

This is VOA news.

High-level talks between the United States and China (are) set to resume next week in hopes of ending an escalating trade war between the two economic superpowers.

U.S. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin confirmed to reporters Wednesday at the White House that he and Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer are headed to Beijing "with a large team."

Both the Americans and Chinese say they want to reach an agreement to avert a March 2 deadline imposed by the U.S. government for an increase in U.S. tariffs on Chinese products.

A new report by the United Nations claims North Korea is working to ensure that its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities cannot be destroyed by military strikes.

VOA correspondent Steve Miller reports from Seoul.

President Trump hailed "tremendous progress" in his dealings with North Korea. But the United Nations report found evidence of a consistent trend on the part of North Korea to disperse its assembly storage and testing locations.

In addition, the U.N. report said North Korea "continues to defy Security Council resolutions through a massive increase in illegal ship-to-ship transfers of petroleum products and coal," rendering the latest U.N. sanctions ineffective.

North Korea has said it will never unilaterally give up its nuclear weapons unless the United States first removes any threat to it.

The second summit is planned between the U.S. and North Korea for February 27 and 28 in Vietnam.

Indeed, American allies have given a cautious welcome to the announcement of that second summit between Mr. Trump and the North Korean dedicator Kim Jong Un. It will be held later this month in the Vietnamese city of Da Nang.

An eight-story building in a residential area of Istanbul collapsed Wednesday, killing at least one person, trapping others in the rubble.

The governor of the city told reporters records show that 43 people lived in 14 apartments in the building. But he said the top three floors were built illegally.

Another top Democrat from the mid-Atlantic American state of Virginia has now admitted to wearing blackface while he was in college in the 1980s.

Associated Press correspondent Julie Walker reports.

Attorney General Mark Herring says he and friends wore brown makeup and wigs in 1980 to look like rappers like Kurtis Blow at a University of Virginia party. He says he understands the pain blackface causes.

Herring, who plans to run for governor, is among those pushing current Governor Ralph Northam to resign after a photo of two men - one in blackface, another wearing a KKK robe and hood - appeared on his medical school yearbook page.

After apologizing for appearing in the photo, Northam said it wasn't him but did admit to wearing blackface in 1984 when he dressed as Michael Jackson.

You can find more on these and other late breaking and developing stories, from around the world, around the clock, at voanews.com and on the VOA news mobile app. I'm Christopher Cruise, VOA news.